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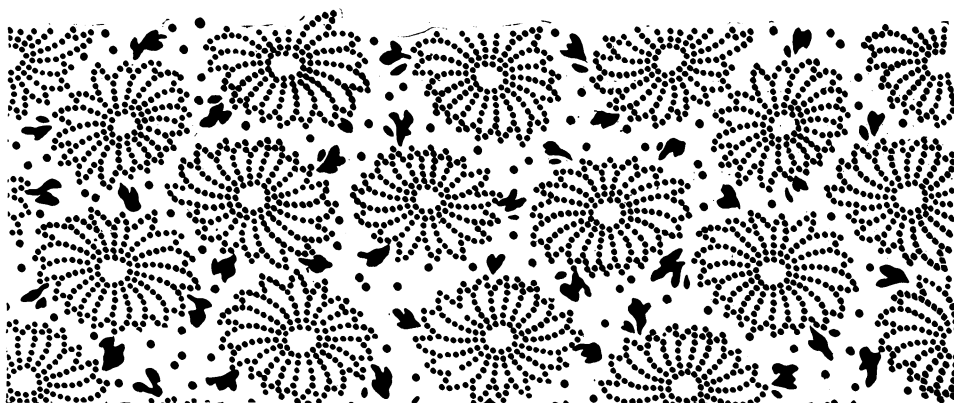
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*Stencil Pattern**Chrysanthemums*

### Japanese Stencils

UNTIL recently stenciling has been regarded by us as a mechanical process unworthy of an artist and to be employed only by craftsmen willing to sacrifice originality and beauty to swift reproduction.

It is now fairly well understood even in the West that no such sacrifice is necessary, and that for over a century and a half the Japanese have been stenciling the silks and cottons which are so much admired.

Processes have interested this Museum much less than results, and we have seldom gone into the technique of the arts of which we possess examples; but in the case of textiles our collection of stencils justifies us in making an exhibition of what might be called "tools," provided that it is clearly understood that they are worthy to rank as works of art in themselves.

This exhibition, which is installed in the room on the first floor at the southeastern corner of the Japanese Court, will illustrate pure design as well as any group of objects that the department could show. The color of the resulting decoration on cloth is of course not seen, but all the other elements that please the eye in decoration—rhythm, balance, composition, and the rest—are there. In some cases we have even the last and most compelling factor of interest—"representation."

The first Japanese stencils were probably used some two hundred years ago in Kyoto, which from the tenth century until forty years ago was the capital city of the empire and the chief seat of arts and of crafts. To-day stencils are used on all sorts of cloths, from the huge figures on the shop signs and theatrical curtains down to the delicate patterns on the silken *kimono* of the *geisha* and court ladies. They are not all successful as designs, however much the present demand for Oriental productions may popularize them.

In general, the technique of making and using paper stencils is simple enough, but, as in any craft, mechanical skill and propriety of design must go hand-in-hand. In brief, the design is "restrained,"

as the dyers say, by a paste which is applied to the parts of the cloth to be left uncolored, and the piece is dipped and steamed as a whole.

The designer submits his picture to the cutter, who takes a careful tracing from it and cuts out those portions of the background and design which are not to receive color. Through the holes thus left, a starchy paste is rubbed on the cloth with a flexible wooden spatula, the stencil is then pulled off, and the cloth turned over to the dyer to steam and soak.

When the paste is removed the pattern is found to have taken on the bare spaces of the material.

*Stretching the Cloth to be Stenciled*

If the design includes more than one color, the process is repeated, this time with the restraining paste applied to the first colored areas and to whatever places are to be left white.

Each new color presupposes a fresh tracing from the original drawing, from which is cut all the spots not to receive that particular dye.

The process of applying the restraining paste through the stencil is illustrated by a reproduction of a print by Kuniyoshi taken from *Somemono Hayamanabu*, "Quick Dyeing Methods," published in Tokyo. The print shows a woman at work on a length of cloth suspended from either end. The cross tension is supplied by slivers of bamboo, spiked at the ends, which are longer than the width of the cloth, and, piercing the opposite edges of the strip and bending beneath it, act like springs.

The paper in which the design is cut is very thin and tough. Five or six sheets are cut at one time, after which they are glued together two and two, often reinforced by filaments of raw silk glued between, which bridge the gaps and hold the more fragile parts of the design in place. The upper surface of the paper is then made waterproof with a preparation of the tannic juices from the persimmon and the walnut.

Elaborate and delicate cuttings are possible only when the silk threads are used for reinforcement, and the cheaper stencils are necessarily designed to do without them.

One of the illustrations shows the stencil itself, a reversal of the resulting pattern; the other is made from a print made on sensitive paper and gives the true design.

*Bibliography.*—International Studio, December, 1907, May, 1910; Art Journal, May, 1901; Stencils of Old Japan, by Hart; American Homes and Gardens, February, 1906; Sutherland, Public Library No. 4070. 89; The Craftsman, Modern Dye-stuffs Applied to Stencilling, by Prof. Charles Pellew; A Book of Delightful and Strange Designs, by Andrew W. Tuer, F.S.A., English, French, and German text.

L. W.



Stencil

Carp Swimming

### Handbook of the Museum

A NEW edition of the Handbook of the Museum, adapted to the present building, has just been issued. The general form of the book is unchanged. Several illustrations have been added, and the pages now number VIII, 349. For portability and easy opening in the hand an edition has been printed on thinner paper. The size of the volume is thereby reduced nearly

one-third. The illustrations still serve their purpose as reminders of the objects.

As in the previous edition, the plans of the main, or exhibition, floor and of the ground, or reserve, floor are printed for convenience of reference on the inside of the front and back covers. A text opposite each briefly describes the floor. Seven sections are devoted to the seven departments of the Museum, the galleries following in the order of the circuits shown by guidelines in the main floor plan. An eighth section describes the collections of Antique and Italian Renaissance Casts, and after a page containing a Synoptical Table of the History of Art, a supplementary section gives information about the Museum, its growth, and the plans for the completion of the buildings. A note on conditions of admission opens the volume, and a map of the location of the Museum closes it.

Apart from brief historical prefaces, the text of the department sections consists of comment on an object or objects illustrated on the same page, and selected at once for importance and availability for reproduction. By this emphasis on the individual object the Handbook has sought to make a closer approach to the needs of the visitor than is possible either by a simple list of exhibits or by a connected review of the art they represent. The volume is not a catalogue nor a history, but a companion in the galleries and souvenir of them. A visitor is in a museum to look at its contents, and needs to have his seeing made enjoyable and profitable. To this end it is not enough to name and date the objects, as in a simple catalogue, or to refer to them incidentally among irrelevant material, as in a historical review. As an aid to seeing, a list is deficient and a history redundant. The immediate need of the visitor is for information general in character and yet bearing directly on objects before him. This requirement the Handbook aims to meet.

In all the galleries many exhibits are passed over without mention. A complete catalogue is impracticable in a large museum. A standing list of a growing collection is a contradiction in terms, and one that should be kept complete by successive revisions would soon defeat its own purpose by its unmanageable size. On the other hand, in all the department sections there may be objects mentioned which at the time are not shown in the exhibition galleries. The Handbook is a companion to the whole contents of the Museum, both the exhibits on the main floor and the reserves on the ground floor, which are also accessible to all visitors by or without request.

The number of objects individually commented on in the Handbook and its consequent usefulness as an aid in seeing the collections may increase in two ways as the Museum grows, without making the book unwieldy. The present thinner paper admits of nearly a half more pages. The illustrations might eventually be dispensed with. Although an aid in identifying and recalling the objects, they are not essential to the plan of the book.